

A RESOLUTION to honor and congratulate Larry Finch on his extraordinary record of success as a player, assistant coach and head coach of the University of Memphis basketball team.

WHEREAS, in an era where loyalty to a sports team is fleeting, it is refreshing to know that Larry Finch has remained steadfastly and unquestionably loyal to the University of Memphis basketball team, whether in good times or, on rare occasions, in bad times, as a star player (1970-1973), valued assistant coach (1979-1986) and as highly successful head coach since 1986, and

WHEREAS, in 1973, Coach Finch was the catalyst in leading the Tigers to their first NCAA Final Four appearance, when they finished runner-up to the UCLA Bruins, and he also helped them achieve a coveted spot in the National Invitational Tournament, in 1972; and

WHEREAS, in his three exemplary seasons as a player, the Tigers won 63 games and only lost 21 and either won or tied for two Missouri Valley Conference championships. He ranks third on the all-time school scoring list, with a notable 1,869 points; and

WHEREAS, Coach Finch was a well-regarded collegiate athlete, who earned Associated Press and United Press International All-American Honorable Mention recognition, was selected to four additional All-American teams and was named the Missouri Valley Conference Player of the Year, two years in a row; and

WHEREAS, after his collegiate days, he was drafted by the Los Angeles Lakers in the fourth round of the 1973 NBA draft, but chose to play for the Memphis franchise of the American Basketball Association, until its demise; and

WHEREAS, Coach Finch started his illustrious coaching career at Richland Junior High, then went to Messick High School, in 1976; he joined his collegiate coach Gene Bartow in 1977 as an assistant coach for two years at the University of Alabama-Birmingham; and

WHEREAS, in the spring of 1979, Tiger fans were ecstatic when they learned that Coach Finch was joining the staff as an assistant coach. They were not disappointed during his seven years in that crucial position; he had a very admirable record, which included a team record of 158-58. Much of the credit for the success of the team appropriately went to Finch, who recruited numerous great players, including three All-Americans: Keith Lee, Andre Turner and William Bedford; and

WHEREAS, in 1986-1987, his rookie season as coach, he faced numerous questions, including the gargantuan task of replacing three National Basketball Association draft picks; he quickly answered any who doubted his ability by compiling an enviable 26-8 record; and

WHEREAS, after that historic season, Coach Finch was named Metro Conference Coach of the Year and was selected the Basketball Times National Rookie Coach of the Year; and

WHEREAS, in his second season as head coach, he found himself short-handed of players and, after five games, was forced to play with inexperienced players. Memphis still compiled an exceptional 20-12 overall record, making Coach Finch only the second basketball coach in school history to win twenty or more games in each of his first two seasons; and

WHEREAS, that beloved Tiger squad also qualified for the prestigious NCAA Tournament and reached the second round; and

WHEREAS, in the 1988-1989 season, Memphis added another chapter to their glorious athletic history, compiling a marvelous 21-11 overall record, beating three Top 20 teams and placing second in the always-tough Metro Conference regular season title scramble; and

WHEREAS, Coach Finch became the first Tiger coach to reach the difficult 67 victory plateau during his first three seasons and was chosen Metro Conference Coach of the Year for the second time in three years; and

WHEREAS, the 1989-1990 season was another memorable year for Memphis; Coach Finch took a young squad, consisting of only three seniors, three juniors, five sophomores and three freshmen and expertly molded them into one of the top teams in the Metro Conference. His team was ranked in the Top 25 for several weeks and had quality wins over Top 20 foes Oregon State and Louisville; and

WHEREAS, the 1990-1991 Tiger squad recorded 17 hard-fought victories and earned a trip to play in the epic National Invitational Tournament, the oldest such tournament, and beat University of Alabama-Birmingham to reach the second round; and

WHEREAS, the 1991-1992 season was one of the best in school history; and with help from top-notch newcomers Anfernee Hardaway and David Vaughn, Coach Finch led Memphis to an outstanding 23-11 record with regular season triumphs over fifth-ranked Arkansas, twelfth-ranked Missouri and twenty-first-ranked Tulane and impressive road victories against Vanderbilt and UAB; and

WHEREAS, he also recorded eye-opening wins in the NCAA Championship Tournament over nineteenth-ranked DePaul, sixth-ranked Arkansas and ACC power Georgia Tech. The Tigers finished the season ranked seventeenth in the authoritative USA Today-CNN Top 25 Coaches Poll; and

WHEREAS, the 1992-1993 season was again one in which Memphis demonstrated tremendous success despite the adversity of being without key players, David Vaughn, who experienced a season-ending injury, and Anfernee Hardaway, who forewent his remaining eligibility year to enter the NBA; and

WHEREAS, the Tigers had a fine 20-12 record, made their second straight NCAA Tournament appearance and beat fourth-ranked Cincinnati, eighteenth-ranked Vanderbilt and twentieth-ranked Marquette; and

WHEREAS, in the middle of that season, when the Tigers defeated Chaminade in the Maui Classic on December 21, 1992, Coach Larry Finch reached a significant milestone: his five hundredth game as a University of Memphis player, assistant coach or head coach; and

WHEREAS, Coach Finch, known throughout his storied career as an excellent recruiter, then went out and recruited an exceptional class, widely acknowledged to be one of the best in the country. It included three of the top thirty recruits in the nation, with two McDonald's All-Americans and Cedric Henderson. This class was ranked as high as third in the country by several publications; and

WHEREAS, the 1993-1994 season saw the Tigers storm to their third straight Great Midwest Tournament championship game by upsetting number 22 UAB and number 21 Saint Louis; and

WHEREAS, the 1994-1995 recruits included Lorenzen Wright, one of the top 15 players in the country; and

WHEREAS, at the start of the current season, Coach Larry Finch had an overall record as head coach of 158-97, a winning percentage of .610; and

WHEREAS, with 20 victories already this season, Coach Finch is the all-time winningest University of Memphis coach; and

WHEREAS, a very amiable person, his tremendous ability and infectious enthusiasm have been the main reason that the city has united behind the University of Memphis basketball program, making a ticket to a Tiger basketball game a much-sought-after item; and

WHEREAS, after the 1987-1988 season, Coach Finch was specially recognized by several community organizations and received an Award for Meritorious Service from the Shelby County government, the Headliner Award as the top newsmaker from the Memphis Gridiron, and a Community Service Award for his work with youth from the National Conference of Christians and Jews; and

WHEREAS, his lengthy list of additional honors includes being selected the Tennessee Sports Writers' Coach of the Year in 1992; and

WHEREAS, Coach Finch is strongly supported in his efforts by his charming wife Vickie and three children Shanae, Larry, Jr. and James; and

WHEREAS, it is probably impossible in mere words to describe the enormous contribution made by Coach Larry Finch to the University of Memphis basketball program, Shelby County, the state of Tennessee and to countless individuals who have benefited by his rare example; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE NINETY-NINTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, That we honor and praise Coach Larry Finch, salute his many accomplishments, and wish him well in his future endeavors.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That appropriate copies of this resolution be prepared for presentation to Coach Finch and to the University of Memphis, with this final clause omitted from such copies.

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